DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 359 211 TM 019 837

AUTHOR Hamm, Jarold D.

TITLE A Qualitative Study of the Work and the Contextual Factors That Affect the Work of Exemplary Public School Curriculum Directors in Washington State: A Preliminary Analysis.

PUB DATE Apr 93

NOTE 31p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Atlanta, GA, April 12-16, 1993).

PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Administrator Responsibility; *Context Effect; *Curriculum Development; Data Collection; *Educational Change; Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; Organizational Climate; Political Influences; Public Schools; Qualitative Research; Research Methodology; School Districts; *School Restructuring; *Work Environment

IDENTIFIERS *Curriculum Directors; *Washington

ABSTRACT

It has been difficult to define the work of curriculum directors for a variety of reasons related to educational structures and policies. Through the use of qualitative methodology, this study provides an in-depth analysis of the work of four exemplary curriculum directors in an effort to define their duties and responsibilities, identify the contexts in which they work, and gain knowledge that will help prepare others for work as curriculum directors. Data collection included observation, interviews, and document collection. For a variety of reasons, portraiture (Lightfoot 1883), a highly interactive research form, was the qualitative methodology chosen. The work of curriculum directors is impacted by various contextual factors at local, state, and federal levels; and it cannot be separated from its environment. The core work is composed of activities, duties, and roles focused on improving the instructional part of the organization. Work varies with respect to the force or impact of each contextual factor. It is organized according to the following themes: (1) communication; (2) curriculum and instruction; (3) program management; and (4) technical expertise. Study findings reveal the uncertainty, vulnerability, and slow progress of curriculum directors in their efforts toward school change and restructuring. One table illustrates the conceptual picture of the work in context. (SLD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED359211

A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE WORK AND THE CONTEXTUAL FACTORS THAT AFFECT THE WORK OF EXEMPLARY PUBLIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM DIRECTORS IN WASHINGTON STATE: A PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

JAROLD D. HAMM

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Jarold D. Hamm
Department of Education Administration and Supervision
Washington State University
Pullman, Washington

April, 1993

This paper was prepared for the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association held in Altanta, Georgia, April 12-16, 1993.

TM019837

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE WORK AND THE CONTEXTUAL FACTORS THAT AFFECT THE WORK OF EXEMPLARY PUBLIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM DIRECTORS IN WASHINGTON STATE: A PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

Introduction

Demands at national, state, and local levels for increased excellence in public schools by numerous commissions, agencies, and citizens, call for renewed efforts to find better and more effective instructional practices. Critics identify increased costs and declining test scores to question how materials are selected, courses organized, and instruction takes place. Many of these criticisms lay in the domain of either curriculum or instruction. The improvement of instruction and the development of curriculum are the responsibility of each educator. However, the traditional role of leadership in this area has been the responsiblity of a district level administrator responsible for curriculum and instruction, frequently called the curriculum director.

Ornstein (1986) found the description between curriculum, instruction, and supervision is fragmented and in flux. If a coordinated plan has not been identified for managing the change that must occur, it is extremely difficult to identify, set up, and complete activities necessary to institutionalize curricular change. By clarifying and describing the curriculum director's position, districts can move toward providing the best possible educational opportunities in all areas (Babcock, 1965).

Researchers, despite a number of studies, have been unable to provide a clear conceptualization of curriculum directors' duties, responsibilities, and work (Babcock, 1965; Doll, Shafer, Christie & Salsbury, 1958; Eye, Netzer, and Krey, 1971; Ornstein, 1986; Reader & Taylor, 1987). Researchers consistently have reported the work with lists of tasks that provide little specificity. The lists tended to be descriptive in nature, do not provide a sense of real people or actual positions, an explanation of why and how curriculum directors did their work, or whether contextual factors affected the work. Additional investigation is needed to clarify and describe the work of curriculum directors.

Background for the Study

The work of the administrator responsible for curriculum and instruction, frequently called the curriculum director, has multiple facets within the school organization. A review of the literature on the work of curriculum directors suggests four broad themes which describe the work, including communication, curriculum and instruction, program management, and technical expertise.

Communication

This administrator must serve as an advisor and have the ability to communicate with a variety of people in matters of curriculum and instruction. First, the curriculum director must represent, meet with, and support the superintendent and board (Babcock, 1965; Bradley, 1985; Zachmeier, 1990). Second, the curriculum director must have the ability to communicate effectively with other administrators (Bailey, 1982; Bradley, 1985; Doll, et al., 1958; Zachmeier, 1990). Third, the ability to work with staff was identified (Babcock, 1965; Bailey, 1982; Doll, et al., 1958). Next the curriculum director must be able to address student needs (Babcock, 1965; Zachmeier, 1990). Finally, the curriculum director must be a liaison to community and citizens (Babcock, 1965; Bailey, 1982; Doll, et al., 1958; Saylor, Alexander & Lewis, 1981; Zachmeier, 1990).

Curriculum and Instruction

According to the literature, the curriculum director is responsible for any changes in the district's curriculum and instruction in three broad areas. First, this administrator coordinates all phases of curriculum development (Babcock, 1965; Bailey, 1982; Doll, et al., 1958; Shafer & Mackenzie, 1965; Zachmeier, 1990). Second, he or she is charged to select appropriate materials for student use (Babcock, 1965; Saylor, et al., 1981; Shafer & Mackenzie, 1965; Zachmeier, 1990). Finally, the curriculum director evaluates programs and courses for effectiveness (Babcock, 1965; Bailey, 1982; Bradley, 1985; Saylor, et al., 1981; Shafer & Mackenzie, 1965).

Program Responsibility

The work of curriculum directors is tightly linked to a significant portion of district-wide instructional activities. The curriculum director is responsible for implementing a staff development program (Babcock, 1965; Bradley, 1985; Doll, et al., 1958; Saylor, et al., 1981; Shafer & Mackenzie, 1965; Zachmeier, 1990). Coordinating various parts of instructional support is a second important activity for curriculum directors (Babcock, 1965; Saylor, et al., 1981; Shafer & Mackenzie, 1965; Zachmeier, 1990).

Technical Expertise

Studies suggest that curriculum directors must be the district's technical expert in all areas of curriculum and instruction (Bailey, 1982; Bradley, 1985; Saylor, et al., 1981; Schwab, 1983). Curriculum directors, as a part of their work must attend conferences, take time to study the literature, and visit with other curriculum experts to maintain and extend their knowledge and expertise within their field.

Need for the Study

Four problems appeared to hamper researchers in forming a concise description of the curriculum directors' position. First, it has been difficult to determine the administrator assigned to this position within school districts. Confusion frequently resulted from the numerous titles given to the central office administrator assigned to this position (Babcock, 1965; Shafer & Mackenzie, 1965).

Second, researchers were unable to provide a clear conceptualization of curriculum directors' work due to difficulty in determining which tasks, roles, or work districts were assigned to the curriculum director (Plugge, 1989). Other experts, such as Doll and others (1958) and Reader and Taylor (1987), reported a diversity in the duties of the central office personnel in charge of instruction. Finally, Bradley (1985) noted role ambiguity was a major problem for curriculum directors since the inception of the position.

A third problem in describing curriculum directors' work includes the complexities of the environment, the many faceted responsibilities, and variances in both the size and

demographics of the school districts. Researchers, such as Zachmeier (1990), Cuban (1988), and Bailey (1982), classified the curriculum director's roles and work in different ways in efforts to clarify the position. While these researchers described the functions or roles of curriculum directors, they tended to ignore different contextual factors that may have prevented a successful description of curriculum directors' work. Contextual factors include such factors as the school district organizational structure, allocation of resources, teacher apathy, union problems, expectations of the superintendent, or the curriculum director's personal qualifications.

A fourth problem is that researchers have frequently described curriculum directors' work with lists that provided little specificity and tended to be general in nature. Previous research frequently relied on forced choice, self-response guides that attempted to identify either what tasks were assigned to the curriculum director (Lovett, 1986; Beggs, 1972; Kirk, 1954) or who should have been responsible for making curriculum decisions (Cooper, 1985; Plugge, 1989).

In summary, through a qualitative methodology, this study provided an in-depth analysis of four exemplary curriculum directors' work in an attempt to answer these queries and attempted to address the following questions: What do curriculum directors do? What can be determined to be similar or different in each one's work? What is a description of an exemplary curriculum director in Washington State? Who determines what his or her work should be? How is the work done? Are there contextual factors that affect the work of curriculum directors? What are the factors? To what degree do the contextual factors affect the work? What knowledge will gained about this specific group will be useful in preparing other men and women for the position of curriculum director?

Research Questions

The research questions that guided the study included the following: **What was the work of exemplary curriculum directors in Washington State school districts? How was each curriculum directors' work conducted? How were contextual factors related to curriculum directors' work?**

Overall Objective

The overall purpose of the study was to add to the body of knowledge in educational leadership and curriculum, as well as develop a grounded framework that identified the work of the curriculum director and how various contextual factors affected the curriculum director's work in Washington State public schools.

Research Design

Consistent with the exploratory nature of the research problem and the purpose of the study a qualitative methodology was used in this study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). Data collection methodology included in-depth participant observation, interviews, document collection, mapping, as well as observing both non-verbal and unobtrusive cues. Data from the study were gathered, coded, and analyzed according to Glaser and Strauss' (1967) constant comparative method. The design of this study was emergent rather than preordinate (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Consistent with qualitative methodology, hypotheses emerged from the data rather than guiding data collection.

Data Collection Procedures

Seven data collection procedures were used in this study of curriculum directors work and the contextual factors that affected their work. Data collection procedures included on-site, intensive participant observations, in-depth interviews with the curriculum director, superintendent, principals, and teachers, and relevant document collection and analysis. In addition, school district brochures, job descriptions, newsletters, newspaper articles, and other district correspondence were also analyzed for relevant data. Data collection was ongoing

and conducted in a circular fashion until it appeared that, through analysis of the data, no additional significant data was generated through these processes.

Confidentiality

Current research practices require that participants be protected from identification in reports which result from research studies. Consistent with this practice, this study or any reports that emanate from this proposed project used pseudonyms for participants, names of schools, and school districts.

Limitations of the Study

The study was exploratory in nature and described the work of a small sample of curriculum directors within the various school districts in Washington State. It was not intended to be a detailed, comprehensive, and definitive study of the work of all the curriculum directors in this state. Therefore, the generalizability of the results must be made with caution.

Since the study dealt with only one state's curriculum directors, the findings of this study may not generate reliable predictions for other states. However, this research could be useful in its ability to either support or question findings in other states.

In this study, the curriculum directors were nominated by others for inclusion. The nominated curriculum directors were those who others believed had an outstanding reputation. This may not be synonymous with effectiveness as a curriculum director.

All the participants in this study were women. There may be some limitation due to gender bias.

Finally, since the participation of the curriculum directors was voluntary, the generalizability of the results and conclusions may be limited.

Significance of the Study

This study has significance at the theoretical, substantive, and practical levels. Theoretically, the results of this study contributed to the existing body of knowledge in educational administration concerned with curriculum directors' work and contextual factors that affect their work. Analysis of these findings suggests a new model to describe work of

experienced, knowledgeable curriculum directors within various contexts in Washington State. Further, this study indicates directions for subsequent research.

Substantively, the results of the study provided insights into the different work, responsibilities, and motives of curriculum directors in relationship to different organizational contexts. The study increased understanding of curriculum directors' work, various contextual factors, and the relationship between them.

At the practical level, the study was useful to guide curriculum directors and districts into new relationships or work. It was useful to describe improvements in administrative practices as a better understanding of the relationships between the curriculum directors' work and the contextual factors is developed. The study suggested implications for those involved in training new curriculum directors.

Report of the Study

The report of this study has three sections. Section one has indicated a need for the work and provided an overview of the study. Section two explains the research methodology, design, and data analysis techniques. In addition, site and participant selection and field research procedures are also discussed. Section three provides a summary, conclusions, and implications for further research.

SECTION TWO

Research Methodology and Procedures

The purpose of this study was to describe the work of exemplary administrators for curriculum and instruction, often identified as the curriculum director, contextual factors within each curriculum director's district, and how the contextual factors affect the work. The work of four curriculum directors, each nominated by their peers, were examined, summarized, and described. Comparisons were made between each administrators' work within a framework of contextual factors.

This section contains three parts. The first part presents a description of the research methodology used in the study. The second component includes the research design, a discussion of site and participant selection, and field research procedures. Finally, the techniques used for data analysis are explained.

Description of the Research Methodology

A qualitative research methodology was selected for the collection and data analysis in this study for several reasons. First, a qualitative research methodology has been found to be appropriate in many diverse fields, including both education and administration, and permits the collection and analysis of data as it naturally occurs (Lofland & Lofland, 1984). Actions, behaviors, and interactions are best understood within each unique contextual environment. To divorce a act, word, or gesture from its context is to lose sight of significance (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). Thus, since the study took place in the field or natural setting, a qualitative methodology was viewed as suitable for this study.

Second, a qualitative research methodology allowed for an emergent design. This allowed the researcher to gather as much information as possible concerning the work within the unique context of each environment. Through a continuous adjustment of study's direction, the researcher focused and redirected attention to allow the study to evolve within those areas that seem most relevant (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Next, through this research method, hypotheses and abstractions emerge from data to form grounded theory, rather than guiding data collection. This contrasts with quantitative methodology which purports data be constructed from over-riding hypotheses. A qualitative research methodology posits multiple realities and makes transferability dependent on local contextual factors and data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Fourth, a qualitative research methodology was deemed appropriate since neither the work nor the contextual factors could easily be recreated in the laboratory or easily described in a quantitative manner with lists, charts, and graphs.

Finally, a qualitative methodology was found to be appropriate for the investigation of areas that have not been extensively explored.

Thus, a qualitative methodology was determined to be appropriate and was selected as the type most closely aligned with the study's scope and purpose.

Portraiture Methodology

Portraiture (Lightfoot, 1883) was selected as the type of qualitative methodology for use in this study for five reasons. First, it is a highly interactive research form and allows interactions between the subjects, environment, and interactions to proceed at multiple levels of human experiences. Portraiture is viewed as a perceptive way for the researcher to capture and highlight the parts of the curriculum director's work within various contextual factors. Second, portraits display aesthetic, as well as empirical and analytical dimensions. In addition, a portrait is not a collection of facts and figures, but directly touch and explain informants. Third, portraits are not static documents, rather they provide a wide-angle view and show clearly the issues and ideas expressed by all involved. Finally, methodology such as portraiture, blends art and science to create a picture of symbols and images that people can connect with to better understand, and to ground complex ideas in, the every day realities of organizations and organizational life.

Research Design

A two phase research design was selected to meet the purposes of the study. The first phase focused on the development of tentative hypotheses consistent with the research questions through a qualitative methodology. The second phase focused on verification of the tentative hypotheses from the first phase and generation of a grounded framework to explain the work.

The field research was conducted in a circular fashion and consisted of several key elements including structured and unstructured interviews, participant observation, and document collection. The data were collected during a nine month period between October, 1992 and March, 1993.

The selection of the sites and participants was not random, but rather based on specific criteria that best met the needs of the study.

Reducing Bias

Even though the researcher has never been a curriculum director, past experiences of the researcher may have influenced the study. Efforts were made in the study to reduce the effect of bias and increase the degree that the findings were determined by the subjects and conditions of the study and not the motivations, interests, or perceptions of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Five procedures were used to reduce bias within the study. First, the researcher entered the field without preconceived notions or ideas, but with the goals to identify the work of curriculum directors and how contextual factors affect the work. While a review of the literature concerning curriculum directors was completed prior to entering the field, the findings were only a framework to begin the study. The researcher allowed theory and other questions to emerge from the data during the course of the study.

Second, the researcher kept a methodological log or journal during the study. In the log, the researcher recorded perceptions and reflections, positive and negative feelings, posed questions, suggested new areas of study, and sought to refine the focus. The log allowed the researcher to expose any cultural baggage that might have existed and provided an avenue to deal

expose and explore it. It also provided a place to discuss private feelings, social barriers, the quality of various pieces of data, and lines of analysis.

Third, triangulation was used to improve the study's credibility. Triangulation provided the researcher the ability to verify facts, themes, and concepts by obtaining information in many ways rather than relying on just one source. Every effort was made to utilize multiple data sources, including interviews with other educators, as well as collection and interpretation of both relevant district and personal documents. These various research techniques were used to provide different sources of the same information to ensure the story was correct.

Next, peer debriefing was used by the researcher. Peer debriefing is a process of discussing with a disinterested peer for the purpose of exploring various aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only within the researcher's mind (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This provided the researcher opportunities to test working hypotheses, allowed the researcher to establish sensible next steps, and helped to keep the researcher honest by having the peer play the devil's advocate.

Finally, frequent member checks took place during the study. Member checking was used to check and verify data, analyze categories, interpretations, and conclusions with stakeholders from whom the data was collected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These checks were intended to solicit subjective input from informants about the intentions of the informants and for purposes of clarification and accuracy.

Selection Criteria

The four administrators were selected from the population of curriculum directors in Washington State in the fall of the 1992-93 school year. They were not randomly selected, but rather the researcher used purposive sampling techniques to ensure a representative sample of experienced, knowledgeable administrators for curriculum and instruction were selected for the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Patton (1980), as cited in Lincoln and Guba (1985), explained that purposive sampling should be used both when the study's purpose is to obtain

information about unusual cases that may be enlightening to study and to document unique variations the administrators used in adapting to different conditions and contextual factors.

Criteria for Site Selection

Three criteria guided the selection of the districts for inclusion into the study. First, the districts were contained within Washington State. This criterion ensured a consistency in state rules, guidelines, policies, and agencies, such as Educational Service Districts, which guide the district. Second, the districts had a student enrollment between 5,000 and 20,000 students. This assured that the districts were large enough to have an administrator responsible for curriculum and instruction, but not so large that the position was divided among several persons. Finally, efforts were made to ensure that districts displayed a variety of organizational contexts.

Criteria for Selection of Participants

Five qualifications were necessary for a curriculum director to be considered for the study. These criteria were established to ensure that participants selected to take part in the study were experienced administrators in curriculum and instruction. First, participants had to meet the following definition of this administrator. The administrator for curriculum and instruction was that person in a school district organization who has responsibility to monitor, change, stabilize, and evaluate a district's formal curriculum. Second, the administrator must have had a reputation as a knowledgeable leader. Other curriculum experts, for example active leaders in the Washington State Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and university leaders noted for work in the curriculum area, nominated candidates. Third, the administrator must have worked full-time in the curriculum and instruction position. Fourth, the administrators must have held their current position for at least three years, and were not contemplating a career change or retirement in the forthcoming school year. Finally, they must have worked in one of the districts that meet the site selection criteria.

Practical Criteria for Selection of Sites and Participants

Two practical criteria were established to facilitate data collection time and minimize costs. First, when more than one administrator for curriculum and instruction met the criteria, the one most convenient to the researcher was included in the study.

Second, both the administrator responsible for curriculum and instruction and the district must have agreed to participate in the study. The research was undertaken with the understanding that participation was voluntary and included only those administrators who agreed to be a part of the study. It must be noted, however, that the initial set of selected administrators chose to participate in the study.

Actual Selection Process of Participants

Identified administrators for curriculum and instruction were contacted by telephone to explain the study and gain their approval as participants. This initial contact was followed by a written communication that asked for written permission from the informant and the district. After securing written permission from the required number of informants, the researcher developed a schedule of interviews and observations.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collected for this study consisted of interviews, observations, documents, mapping, and observation of both non-verbal and unobtrusive cues. All data collected was transcribed and coded. The data collection was ongoing and conducted in a circular fashion to allow for additional data collection until no additional significant data was generated.

Data collected in the field came from many sources, such as superintendents, principals, teachers, as well as curriculum directors themselves, to provide an opportunity both to increase an understanding of the factors that affected the work of this administrator and for triangulation of data.

The research was carefully planned to achieve reliability, establish creditability, and reduce bias.

Participant Interviews

Interviews were one source of data collection in this study. Multiple, in-depth interviews were conducted with each of the four administrators for curriculum and instruction. Other interviews were conducted with key informants, such as the superintendent, a principal, and a teacher, within each district.

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) defined a formal interview as a purposeful conversation directed by the researcher to get information. Frequently, the interviews with the informants took place within the context of an observation and could not be separated from other research techniques. However, several formal interviews took place during the study.

Interview Guides

The interview guides used were less formal or structured than a questionnaire. The study's interview guides, containing open-ended, semi-structured questions, were developed using a review of pertinent literature and the guiding questions of the study as a framework to understand the informants' experiences as the curriculum director (Lofland & Lofland, 1984). First, topics for the guides' questions were synthesized from a review of literature concerning administrators for curriculum and instruction, their work, their qualifications, and various contextual factors in school districts. Second, the guiding questions in the purpose were used to provide an overall framework for the interview guide. These questions included: (1) What was the work of exemplary administrators for curriculum and instruction in Washington State school districts; (2) How was the administrator for curriculum and instruction's work conducted; and (3) How were contextual factors related to the work.

Each interview guide consisted of approximately 18 questions. The questions were sequenced to place the informant at ease, seek his/her opinions, and gather data on the above mentioned categories, see, for example, Papalewis (1988) or Lofland and Lofland (1984). Interviews sought to elicit examples and stories that describe the work and various contextual factors. The questions followed an introductory section.

The introductory section contained three parts. First, the introduction stated the purpose and nature of the study. Second, it provided a guarantee of confidentiality. Finally, the introduction included something about the researcher, the study, and asked permission to audio tape the interview.

The questions in the interview guide were semi-structured and open-ended to encourage a rich dialogue between researcher and informant. The interview guide was not a tightly structured set of questions to be asked sequentially and verbatim, rather is a list of things the researcher was to be sure to ask about when talking to each informant (Lofland & Lofland, 1984).

The selected sample of four (4) administrators for curriculum and instruction as well as other appropriate staff, such as the superintendent, a principal, and a teacher were interviewed, using the previously developed interview guides. Through these interviews, the shared beliefs, perceptions, and values of these educators enriched the study with important data. In addition, the interviews with other key district staff provided additional data necessary for triangulation.

As each informant was interviewed, additional nominations were solicited and frequently the preliminary list was amended. Each informant was interviewed until it appeared that, through analysis of the data, no additional significant data was being generated through these processes.

Participant Observation

The researcher spent a minimum of four days in each district as a privileged observer (Walcott, 1970) with each administrator for curriculum and instruction to collect participant observation data that focused on the administrator's work. The participant observation involved interweaving, looking, listening, as well as watching and asking (Lofland & Lofland, 1984). It was used to enrich and supplement informant interviews (Lofland & Lofland, 1984). The participant observation data gathered helped gain insight into the curriculum director's work and various contextual factors that condition their work.

As an observer, McCall and Simmons (1969) stated the role of the researcher is to get the story of an event by questioning participants about what and why is happening. The observer then fills out the story by asking people about their relationship to the event, their reactions, opinions, and evaluations of its significance.

Arrangements were made to observe each administrator for curriculum and instruction for periods of not less than four hours during typical work times on several days. During each observation, field notes were recorded and later transcribed and coded. In addition to pertinent participant observation data, relevant document collection was gathered to add richness to the observations and study.

Document Collection

Documents were collected to provide validity checks, as well as to supplement and enrich the quality of the participant observation and interview data collected in the study. Documents provided a stable and rich source of information, were often contextually relevant and grounded in specific settings or environments, and were non-reactive in nature (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Documents included such items as job descriptions, newsletters, and a variety of district reports. Collected documents provided data for triangulation of data and to help in understanding the district's contextual factors during the study.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the study's data used methods typical of traditional qualitative methods. "Data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging . . . materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and enable you to present what you have discovered to others" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, P. 145). In addition, Schatzman and Strauss (1973) indicated the purpose of qualitative data analysis is the discovery of significant classes of things, persons, and events and the properties that characterize them.

Glaser and Strauss' (1967) constant comparative method was used in the study to provide a continually developing process in which each stage provided guidance for the next

stage. This method compared incidents to each category, integrated categories and their properties, delimited theories, and facilitated the writing of tentative hypotheses or theories.

Data analysis began with the first data collected and continued throughout the study. Data from the typed transcripts of the interviews, field notes from the participant observation portion of the study, relevant documents, and all other information gathered were examined in relationship to the themes suggested by the literature and the questions that guided the study. These questions were asked: (1) What was the work of exemplary curriculum directors in Washington State school districts; (2) How was each curriculum directors' work conducted; and (3) How were contextual factors related to curriculum directors' work. The first stage of data analysis was to establish a coding system and to carefully code all field notes, interview transcripts, and other documents. These codes targeted types of work and various contextual factors. Initial categories included: physical descriptions, work style, the curriculum arena, people connections, contextual factors, vision about curriculum and instruction, and work. These categories served as not as an end, but as an opening to begin to explain and predict behavior (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Data collection and analysis were intermeshed and continual.

In the second stage, an analysis and comparisons were made of the curriculum director's work, the personal characteristics of administrators for curriculum and instruction, and the districts' organizational contexts to synthesize a guiding metaphor or general scheme from the data (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). The researcher sought to provide linkages between classes or properties in the data until a guiding metaphor or general scheme emerged.

Three levels of comparisons were made, that is the identification and differences in each administrator for curriculum and instructions' work, the contextual factors within each district, and the interrelationship of the work to the contextual factors. Comparisons were made in each area of data collection and between each contextual factor to determine the significance and differences in the types of work. Analysis ceased when it appeared that no more significant data was being generated.

SECTION THREE

Summary, Conclusions, and Implications

The purpose of this section is to present a summary and the conclusions of the study, discuss implications of the study, and identify areas for further research. This section is divided into three parts. In part one, *The Summary and Conclusions of the Study*, an overview of the study is provided and the results of the study presented. The second part, *Implications of the Study*, provides insights for better understanding the work of curriculum directors. Part three, *Implications for Further Research* presents suggestions in hopes of encouraging others to further this work and to examine the work through alternative samples and data collection methodology.

The Summary and Conclusions of the Study

The summary and conclusion section is organized into four parts. First, an overview of the study is provided. Second, the contextual factors that condition the work are summarized. Third, the work of the curriculum directors is discussed. Finally, how contextual factors affect the work is presented.

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to develop a grounded framework to describe the work of exemplary curriculum directors within the contextual factors that exist in each district. The curriculum director, and especially the work, has received limited attention in recent research.

Nominations for effective curriculum directors were solicited from current curriculum directors and university leaders. The four most frequently identified curriculum directors were contacted and invited to be a part of the study.

The data for the study was collected through a qualitative methodology and included observations and interviews with curriculum directors and other key informants within the four districts. Efforts were made to identify both the work and the contextual factors that affected the work.

Data was analyzed using Glaser and Strauss' (1967) constant comparative method. Data analysis began with the first data collected and continued throughout the study. Incidents were compared to create categories, which in turn allowed for an integration of categories and their properties, and facilitated the writing of tentative hypotheses or theories.

Results of the Study

The results of the study contains five parts. The first part presents the theoretical framework. The second part explains the contextual factors that condition the work. The third component summarizes the work of exemplary curriculum directors. Finally, the relationship of the contextual factors to the work is presented.

Theoretical Framework

A framework that interrelates the work of the curriculum director, the contextual factors, and organizational goals has been developed, through an analysis of the data, in answer to the questions that guided the study. These questions included (1) What was the work of exemplary administrators for curriculum and instruction in Washington State school districts; (2) How was the administrator for curriculum and instruction's work conducted; and (3) How were contextual factors related to the work.

Within each district, both the external and internal circumstances define and shape the organization's goals. The goals in turn define each person's role, therefore defining the work.

The environment, or contextual factors, influences, directs, or affects the work. As the contextual factors condition the work, each affects the attainment of the organization's goals. Moreover, and importantly, the factors either support or impede reaching the goals.

Through analysis, the work of the curriculum director can be understood through consideration of three areas, a description of the contextual factors that affect the work, the nature of the work itself, and the relation of the factors to the work. This framework is explained developed in the following sections.

Contextual factors that Condition the Work

The work of curriculum directors was impacted by various contextual factors that existed both within each district and at the local, state, and federal levels. The factors within which each curriculum director worked were derived from internal and external sources, past and present realities, and projected future goals and plans. The contextual factors created a tension or stress in the work by posing potential conflicts in making decisions, actions taken, or planning done by the curriculum director.

Each contextual factor was found to either enhance or inhibit efforts to improve the instructional portion of the organization. Each curriculum director endeavored to achieve a state of equilibrium in the work whereby the contextual factors and the instructional portion of the organization reached homeostasis and the overall organizational goals were being addressed.

The contextual factors are grouped into four broad areas or categories, including internal factors, external factors, intrinsic factors, and time factors. First, the internal factors are comprised of elements within the district, including the organizational structure, procedures, budget priorities, and organizational goals. The organizational structure describes the position and status of the curriculum director within the organization. District procedures include the organization's decision-making process and various rules and regulations within the organization. Budget priorities reflect monetory considerations given to curriculum and instruction. Finally, the district goals represent the priorities of the organization.

Second, the external factors include the governmental and community environments that surround and embody each district. Governmental contextual factors encompass the rules, regulations, and other mandates issued through state and federal agencies. Contextual factors that evolve from the community are characterized by local expectations and specific local demands placed on the district by patrons and citizen groups.

Third, intrinsic factors are qualities that exist internally within the district's staff. The readiness at the knowledge level for change, motivation or commitment to change, past history regarding change, and their competence or the use of specific skills are all contextual

factors found in district employees and do affect the curriculum director's work. The leadership ability of the curriculum director, as well as technical knowledge base, reputation, and respect from district staff form a second contextual factor that affects the work. Each of these contextual factors either enhances or impedes the curriculum director's work.

Finally, the time factor describes the priority given to each employee's workday, including both the curriculum director's workday and the allotment of staff time. How the curriculum director is directed to spend the day affects the work. Any tasks, roles, or work not directly related to curriculum and instruction assigned to the curriculum director have an impact on the work. In addition, the amount of quality time provided to staff for training, education, inservice, and coaching is also a contextual factor which affects the curriculum director's work.

The Work of Exemplary Curriculum Directors

The core work is comprised of activities, duties, and roles and focused on improving the instructional part of the organization. Work varies with respect to the force or impact of each contextual factor.

While many of the curriculum director's roles include multiple types of work and occur simultaneously, they are synthesized into distinct and separate units within this analysis. The work is divided into four components, each focused toward achieving the organizational goals, addressing contextual factors, improving the organization, and providing organizational stability.

The work is organized according to the four themes presented earlier: (1) communication, (2) curriculum and instruction, (3) program management, and (4) technical expertise.

1. Communication

The ability of each curriculum director to communicate with all segments of the organization is vital. The curriculum director is the leader, spokesperson, and visionary for the curriculum and instructional part of the organization, as well as controller of information.

While the organization sets the overall goals, the curriculum director works to interpret, explain, and implement them within the organization. This administrator provides articulation between curricular areas, works to modify existing programs, as well as organize and develop new programs to create systematic change. The curriculum director occupies a place in the organization as advisor to the superintendent and school board, and must be able to communicate effectively with subordinates and colleagues, concerning instruction and curriculum changes and improvements.

In this study, the curriculum directors had excellent communication skills. Each modeled strong facilitation skills and used the power of group dynamics superbly.

Each curriculum director was a member of the district-wide leadership team and the superintendent's cabinet or advisory group. Time was spent in educating and communicating with school board and superordinate. In each case, the curriculum directors were viewed and utilized by colleagues and superiors as the district's technical expert and spokesperson for the instructional portion of the organization.

A great deal of time was spent by each curriculum director in meetings. Each had responsibility for addressing the school board, educating many advisory groups, and informing other citizen groups concerning a multitude of instructional and curricular issues. The curriculum directors viewed themselves as the givers and receivers of vital information for the organization. Their presence and time was viewed as purposeful, as in each case, the curriculum directors each viewed their role at the meeting to be the information source and to pass information of a curriculum and instructional nature.

2. Curriculum and Instruction

The curriculum director directs and leads the curricular and instructional portion of the organization. As the instructional leader, each curriculum director is responsible for planning, presenting, monitoring, and adjusting the district's vision in curriculum and instruction within the organization. Each is responsible to ensure that the goals of curriculum and instruction are

accomplished. The curriculum director is the leader in implementing new strategies and curricular changes and is ultimately responsible for the entire curricular process.

This group of curriculum directors all had an assistant superintendent within the organizational framework above them who reported directly to the superintendent. In each case, the curriculum director had the role, responsibility, or work of presenting, monitoring, and implementing the instructional goals of the organization and creating necessary change to achieve the organizational goals, not the assistant superintendent. In each case no curriculum director had the direct line authority to directly supervise the work being done.

Planning within each site's curriculum and instruction division was done in a collaborative manner in conjunction with each curriculum director's superordinate. In no case, however, was the curriculum director's vision for the future stifled by the assistant superintendent.

3. Program Management

Plugge (1989), in his study, indicated that researchers have been unable to provide a clear conceptualization of curriculum directors' work due to difficulty in determining which tasks, roles, or work were assigned to the curriculum director.

The curriculum directors in this study focused closely on work that was tightly linked to accomplishing designated organizational goals. In examining each director's selection process, clearly those activities that did not meet the organizational goals were ignored or assigned low status.

While not totally ignoring the support service portion of the organization, only those roles or tasks that enabled the instructional division to move toward the goals were deemed important by the curriculum directors studied. At times, these four curriculum directors chose to focus their efforts on work they viewed as related, but viewed by others as somewhat tangential to their primary work, the improvement of curriculum and instruction. In these activities, they addressed the coordination of staff development, teaching of inservice classes,

implementation of assessment, and grant writing, since each was viewed as important supportive work and a necessary extension of their work to accomplish relevant organizational goals.

4. Technical Expertise

The curriculum director is the symbolic leader of the instructional part of the organization. As such, this leader is expected to emulate an outstanding understanding of the curricular and instructional goals of the organization. In addition, the curriculum director must be able to impart this knowledge to other district leaders, teaching staff, and students.

Interviews with these four curriculum directors indicated that each was charged with restructuring and transforming the district through the use of new and evolving practices. Each curriculum director was very skilled in group process skills and consensus building. They modeled excellent teaching strategies.

As technical expert, these administrators were experts in forecasting trends, anticipating problems, and providing information regarding instructional and curricular issues.

Relationship of the Contextual Factors to the Work

The work must be viewed within the contextual factors and the total environment that surrounds the work. Neither work nor the factors can be viewed in isolation. Each is interdependent upon the other.

[Insert Table One about here]

As the contextual factors influence the work, they either inhibit or benefit the work, in turn, moving the organizational goals either toward or away from attainment.

The Vision of Exemplary Curriculum Directors

Each of the four curriculum directors selected for the study understood and were able to present a comprehensive and detailed vision that guided their work. Each curriculum director's work was focused and centered on accomplishing district goals through the creation of district-wide change that matched their particular vision or beliefs. In each case, this vision was found

to be consistent with the overall vision for curriculum and instructional change in each district. The vision became a guide to direct the work through the contextual factors toward meeting the organizational goals.

Implications of the Study

This study was done with the intention of defining the work of exemplary curriculum directors. The findings that surfaced were as complex as the contextual factors within which each curriculum director operated. To understand the work, a clear understanding of the contextual factors is vital. The factors worked either as a sieve, buffer, or contributor though which the work was accomplished.

The analysis of this data provides school leaders with an insight into the work of these four exemplary curriculum directors as each strived to reach the goals of organization. Through the study, the uncertainty, vulnerability, and very slow progress of each curriculum director as they did their work was revealed.

A contribution toward explaining the work of exemplary curriculum directors, the contextual factors that affect the work, and how they are related has been made through the information reported in this study. Practicing curriculum directors and aspiring curriculum directors will benefit from these results. Perhaps the results of this study may benefit aspirants by presenting the experiences of those who have successfully preceded them in the curriculum director's position.

Implications for Further Research

Since the emphasis on school change and restructuring is predicted to increase, additional studies of curriculum directors may benefit school leaders in how to better do their work in order to successfully make the necessary changes to transform schools, improve curriculum and instruction, and improve the school culture.

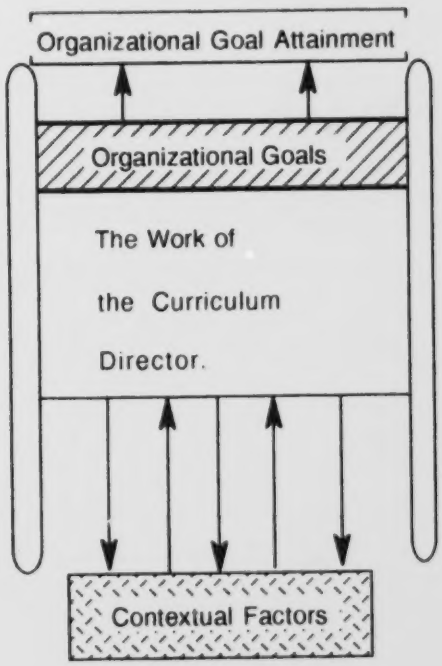
Further, limitations of this study imply the need to further examine curriculum directors and their work by replicating this study using other samples and geographical locations.

In addition, the following are recommended as areas for further investigation:

1. Change the selection criteria and investigate average curriculum directors and compare the findings with this study.
2. Replicate this study in another state.
3. Investigate curriculum directors in larger districts.
4. Complete a national quantitative study using these findings as a basis for data collection.
5. Other questions which need addressing include: What is the relationship of curriculum directors to building principals? Is there a need for a district level curriculum director? How can a curriculum director best facilitate building level staff developers?

Table One

The conceptual picture of the organization, the work, and the contextual factors that affect the work.



External Factors
Internal Factors
Intrinsic Factors
Time Factors

REFERENCES

Babcock, C. D. (1965). The emerging role of the curriculum leader. In R. R. Leeper (Ed.), *The Role of the Supervisor and Curriculum Director in a Climate of Change.* Washington, DC: ASCD.

Bailey, G. D. (1982). *Curriculum Development in the Rural School*. (ERIC Reproduction Service Number: ED 223 373).

Beggs, H. O. (1972). *An Analysis of the Role of Curriculum Administrators in First Class School Districts in the State of Washington.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Washington State University.

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (1982). *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to the Field.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.

Bradley, L. H. (1985). *Curriculum Leadership and Development Handbook*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Cooper, R. L. (1985). *The Roles and Functions of Public School Curriculum Directors as Perceived by Selected Groups of Educators in the State of Alabama.* Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. Auburn University.

Cuban, L. (1988). *The Managerial Imperative and the Practice of Leadership in Schools*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Doll, R. C., Shafer, H. T., Christie, S., & Salsbury, J. (1958). What are duties of the curriculum director? *Educational Leadership, 15*(7), pp. 428-430.

Eye, G. G., Netzer, L., & Krey, R. D. (1971). *Supervision of Instruction, Second Edition*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers.

Fullan, M., with Stiegelbauer, S. (1991). *The New Meaning of Educational Change*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory.* Chicago: Aldine.

Jones, T. G. (1989). *School district personnel speak out on change.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA. (ERIC Reproduction Service Number: ED 307 705).

Kirk, D. L. (1954). *The Role of the Curriculum Director in the Administration of American Public Schools.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Texas Technological College.

Lightfoot, S. L. (1883). *The Good High School: Portraits of Character and Culture.* New York: Basic Books.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Lofland, J., & Lofland, L. H. (1984). *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis.* Belmont, CA.: Wadsworth Publishing Co.

Lovett, G. J. (1986). *The Role and Functions of the Director of Curriculum and Instruction as a Change Facilitator in Selected School Districts of Michigan* . Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Toledo.

McCall, G., & Simmons, J. L. (1969). Issues in Participant Observation: A Text and Reader. In J. Lofland, & L. H. Lofland (Ed.), *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Mickelson, J. M., Appel, M. B., & Prusso, K. W. (1969). The director of curriculum and instruction. *Educational Leadership, 26*(4), pp. 371-375.

Ornstein, A. C. (1986). Curriculum, instruction, and supervision: Their relationship and the role of the principal. *NASSP Bulletin, 70*(489), pp. 74-81.

Papalewis, R. (1988). A case study in organizational culture: Administrator's shared values, perceptions, and beliefs. *Planning and Changing: A journal for School Administrators, 19*(3), pp. 158-165.

Plugge, L. (1989). The Emerging Role of the Curriculum Director in Light of School Reform. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. University of Nebraska.

Reader, W., & Taylor, R. L. (1987). *The curriculum director: Power Vs persuasion* . (ERIC Reproduction Service Number: ED 282 329).

Saylor, J. G., Alexander, W. M., & Lewis, A. J. (1981). *Curriculum Planning: For Better Teaching and Learning* . New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

Schatzman, L., & Strauss, A. (1973). *Field Research: Strategies for a Natural Sociology* . New Jersey: Englewood Cliffs.

Schwab, J. J. (1983). The practical 4: Something for curriculum professors to do. *Curriculum Inquiry, 13*(3), pp. 239-265.

Shafer, H. T., & Mackenzie, G. N. (1965). Securing competent instructional leaders. In R. R. Leeper (Ed.), *The Role of the Supervisor and Curriculum Director in a Climate of Change* pp. 65-87. Washington, DC: ASCD.

Weber, J. R. (1989). Leading the instructional program. In S. C. Smith, & P. K. Piele (Ed.), *School Leadership: Handbook for Excellence* pp. 191-221. Eugene, OR: University Publications.

Walcott, H. (1970). *The man in the principal's office: An ethnographic study.* New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.

Zachmeier, W. J. (1990). *The effective assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction.* Palm Springs, CA: ETC. Publications.